

BARRY M. GOLDWATER RANGE (BMGR)  
PARTNERS MEETING MINUTES  
MAY 17, 2001

1. The Barry M. Goldwater Range Partners Meeting was held on Thursday, May 17, 2001. Colonel James R. Uken called the meeting to order at 1000. The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum hosted the locale of this meeting in Tucson, AZ and Rick Daley, the museum's Executive Director, offered a welcome to the participants.

2. Participants:

Ignacio Beltram	Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society, Phoenix
Pat Birnie	Tucson
Gary Blake	56th Range Management Office (RMO), BMGR Executive Council (BEC) Coordinator, Luke AFB
Mike Brown	Sonoran Desert Natl Monument Manager, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Phoenix
Steve Cornelius	Sonoran Institute, Tucson
Gene Dahlem	BLM, Phoenix
Rick Daley	Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, Executive Director, Tucson
Lorraine Eiler	Hia-Ced O'odham Alliance, Glendale
Bruce D. Eilerts	Center for Biological Diversity, Tucson
Jan Faltisco	56th RMO, Recorder, Luke AFB
Richard Felger	Director, Drylands Institute, Executive Director, Tucson
Major Daniel Garcia	56th RMO, Environmental Science Mgt., Luke AFB
Richard Genser	Sierra Club, Tucson
Jerry Guevin	Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society, Phoenix
John Hall	The Nature Conservancy, Sonoran Desert Proj. Mgr, Tucson
Vergial Harp	Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, Ajo
Gayle Hartmann	Tucson
Carol Heathington	56th RMO, Archaeologist, Luke AFB
Joseph T. Joaquin	Tohono O'odham Nation, Cultural Affairs Office
David G. Mattausich	Safari Club International, Hunt Reports Coordinator, Tucson
Kathryn Mauz	Arizona Remote Sensing Center, Arid Lands Studies, University of Arizona, Tucson
Lisa McCarrick	56th RMO, Environmental Planner, Luke AFB
Curtis McCusland	Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, Ajo
Maurice M. Moore	US Border Patrol, Yuma Sector
Jenny Neeley	Defenders of Wildlife, Southwest Program Coordinator
Ron Pearce	Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS), Yuma
Mike Seidman	Phoenix Zoo, Conservation Coordinator
Jon Shumaker	Maricopa, AZ
Colonel James Uken	Director, 56th RMO, Luke AFB
Larry Voyles	Arizona Game & Fish Department (AGFD), Yuma
Lyn Wilson	Sonoran Desert National Park Friends, Exec Director, Tucson
Tom Zale)	BLM, Yuma
(for Gail Acheson	
Ted Zukoski	Law Fund, Boulder, CO

3. BEC Update/Intergovernmental Executive Committee (IEC) Status: Colonel Uken

a. The Intergovernmental Executive Committee will replace the Partners Meetings as a continued forum to interact with public input. The IEC will be established IAW with Public Law 106-65. The Secretaries of the Air Force, Navy, and Interior are responsible for establishing the IEC.

b. Gary Blake, 56 RMO, has been appointed to serve as the IEC Coordinator. Mr. Blake is in the process of drafting an MOU that will establish procedures for creating a forum for exchanging views, information, and advice relating the management of the BMGR. It is anticipated that the MOU will be presented at the next Partners meeting on 13 Sep 2001 and the IEC will replace the Partners forum in Jan 2002.

c. IEC meetings will be open to the public with participation welcomed.

4. BMGR Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) Status:  
Major Garcia, 56 RMO

a. Major Garcia, 56 RMO reported that completion of the INRMP could be delayed until the remanded Biological Opinions (BOs) and other information are completed (see item 8 below). The court extended the deadline for completion of these documents to 16 Nov 01. This could result in the draft INRMP/EIS being ready for public review/comment in Jan 02, a final document and draft record of decision in June 02, with signature of the ROD approximately 3 months later.

b. If the INRMP is extended, range management by the Air Force and Marine Corps will follow the guidelines of the existing BLM plan.

5. BMGR Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan (ICRMP) Status:  
Carol Heathington, 56 RMO

a. The ICRMP and the Traditional Cultural Places (TCP) and sacred sites study are being completed as two separate documents.

b. The draft of the TCP and sacred sites study has been distributed for comments to the tribal representatives who helped develop it. There will be a series of meetings to discuss additional comments to the TCP study. Comments received will be compiled and be sent to the consultants by the end of Sep 01. The final TCP study will be completed by Dec 01 and includes Area A. About 25 tribes and groups, from Arizona, California, and New Mexico, have expressed interest in cultural resources on the BMGR; however, the degree to which these groups participate in consultation varies. Some actively participate in the process; others simply want to be kept informed of our activities.

c. More work and coordination is still needed on the ICRMP and distribution of the review draft is anticipated for early Nov 01. There will be a meeting for discussion and submission of comments by the end of Feb 02 and the final ICRMP will be completed by May 02.

6. Sonoran Pronghorn Report: Virgil Harp, CPNWR

a. Radio Collaring: Weekly radio telemetry flights continue. On 13 May 01, 15 fawns were seen and the preceding week 13 fawns were observed among the collared animals. The doe to fawn ratio is approximately 1:1. The biologists monitoring pronghorn on NTAC and STAC reported sighting a minimum of eight fawns. Winter conditions have improved the chances of fawn survivability.

b. Forage Enhancement: The AGFD has the funding from the Air Force to initiate this project. An environmental assessment was completed in January. Requests for bids to drill wells have been issued. Forage enhancement work in the Aztec Hills area is temporarily on hold pending some additional culture resource clearance work.

c. The State Historical Preservation Office had some concerns regarding the cultural resources survey on the forage enhancement sites on

the western portion of the range, therefore those sites were not included in the finding of no significant impact.

d. The forage enhancement work is a limited modification to existing conditions, and will include proper scientific control, data gathering, and scientific protocol. The introduction of invasive plants must be prevented.

e. In Apr 01, John Morgart, John Herver, and Jill Bright traveled to the El Vizcaino Biosphere Reserve in Baja California Sur to observe their experimental pronghorn recovery project. They toured the pronghorn breeding and rearing facility and evaluated its potential utility for recovery actions in the US.

f. Status of Recovery Plan: The Recovery Plan supplement is being re-worked by the FWS because the original plan did not establish objectively measurable criteria for removing pronghorn from the endangered species list and estimate the recovery time of the species. The draft supplement was completed on 14 Apr 01 and sent out for review. Responses are due on 18 May 01 and will take two weeks to be incorporated into the draft. The draft of the supplement amendment will be sent out on 9 Jul 01 and there will be a 60 day review period. FWS will discuss scientific data with AGFD.

7. DOD Funded Legacy Program/Invasive Species Workshops: John Hall, The Nature Conservancy

a. Invasive species is a statewide problem and needs to be addressed. Invasive Species Management Workshops were held over the past few months to coordinate and discuss what is being done now, develop a vision, and help facilitate coordinated responses. The workshops brought together representatives from several federal, state, and tribal agencies.

b. Weed eradication is important, but a strategy is also needed to focus on weed prevention. Some thought should be given to having an organized body present to take advantage of funding through such things as Senate Bills and grant proposals.

8. Dr. Richard Felger, Director of The Drylands Institute, is initiating an invasive plant survey encompassing the entire eastern portion of the BMGR. It will be the first large-scale, well-controlled study of invasive plants, and will identify the impact that fire could have on the range.

9. Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements (SEIS) Status: Ron Pearce, MCAS, Yuma

a. On 12 Feb 01, there was a court ruling on the Defenders of Wildlife lawsuit, resulting in five biological opinions and two Environmental Impact Statements being remanded for further analysis of cumulative effects and action areas. The ruling required resolution within 120 days. On 12 Apr 01, the court extended the deadline for resolution to be completed by 16 Nov 01.

b. The USFWS Ecological Services is currently working on the biological opinions and an updated environmental baseline.

c. The Marine Corps SEIS for the Yuma Training Range Complex will be distributed on 7 Jun 01. The public notice of availability will be in the Federal Register on 15 Jun 01. Comments will be due by 30 Jul 01 and the final SEIS will be completed by 21 Sep 01. Areas encompassing cumulative effects and action areas are the Yuma Training Range Complex, east and west range, the cumulative plan adding OPCNM, and activities on the east side of Highway 85.

10. BMGR Law Enforcement: Colonel Uken/Ron Pearce

a. The Air Force is prepared and plans to implement security on the Air Force side of the range by entering into an agreement in Oct/Nov with the Tohono O'odham Nation. This would be 5-year security agreement, with provisions for renewal. BMGR Law Enforcement Personnel will have arrest authority, receive additional training prior to commencing activities on the range, and will wear identifying uniforms. This would provide the equivalent of five full-time security personnel for the eastern BMGR.

b. The Marine Corps Air Station, Yuma have employed two security personnel who will begin their training on 29 May 01 and be in place on the range by Oct 01. They will attend the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center.

#### 11. Air Force Progress Reports:

a. Major Garcia, 56 RMO, reported that a large-scale soil and vegetation survey project on one plus million acres would begin in June and last approximately 5 years. Lisa McCarrick, 56 RMO stated the FONSI was signed last week for flash burning of munitions items. If anyone needs a copy of the final FONSI, let her know. An EA is in progress for the cleanup of old targets; the next step is a cultural resource survey.

b. Lisa McCarrick, 56 RMO, described an EA in progress for installation and operation of Unmanned Threat Emitters (UMTEs). Four emitters would be placed on the tactical ranges: two on ETAC, one on NTAC, and one on STAC. Some mitigation measures being assessed are the fencing of the sites and the installation of radar director collars to protect people and wildlife from the electromagnetic energy from the UMTE. The UMTEs include a generator that would require refueling about every 3 months; it appears solar panels would not be practical due to the large power requirement. Colonel Uken explained UMTEs are needed to enhance combat training on the range.

c. Area A: The Air Force is conducting an environmental baseline survey of the four non-renewed parcels, including Area A. There is no history of target areas in Area A, though munitions are occasionally found there. The present visitor permit system will continue after the land withdrawal expires in November. An agreement will be prepared between the Air Force and BLM regarding responsibilities, response time, and clearance procedures for munitions items encountered in the future.

d. Carol Heathington, 56 RMO, reported that an archaeological survey was completed in Jan-Feb on NTAC. Survey efforts have concentrated on the 1-year and 5-year EOD sweep areas, because EOD activities are the major source of ground disturbance on the range. The archaeologists work closely with EOD to flag known sites, and to train EOD personnel on recognition and avoidance of cultural resources common to the area. Archaeological surveys have been completed on 100% of the 1-year sweep areas on NTAC and ETAC, and this fall we anticipate completing the same on STAC. Field trips are conducted at the end of each survey to allow our consultation partners to observe the findings of each effort. The next step will be consultations regarding sites in proximity to targets. An archaeological survey of about 2000 acres on Manned Range 4 is one day away from completion. Five sites were found in the first week in areas affected by EOD sweeps.

e. Colonel Uken stated that, due to the increased accuracy of weapons delivery systems (i.e., fighter and rotary wing aircraft), regulations governing the size of annual and 5 year EOD sweep areas are under review for possible reduction. This will reduce ground disturbance and range closure time.

f. EOD Vehicles: Major Garcia stated that previous research identified the ideal vehicle for EOD clearances, but the effort was

discontinued because the low quantity of vehicles would result in a very high unit cost. He would prefer to focus on less intrusive methods to survey for the presence of munitions items, such as using camera imagery, instead of driving a grid pattern with large vehicles. (Post-meeting note: According to the EOD team, reducing tire pressures resulted in greater susceptibility to sidewall punctures from rocks and branches.)

g. The Border Patrol is trying to deter the significant increase in UDAs crossing the range. Colonel Uken stated that in concert with the Border Patrol, if there is an ongoing pursuit operation, flight training on the affected sub-range is suspended until the operation is complete. When pronghorn monitors are on the range, they detect and report UDAs. When hired, BMGR Law Enforcement Personnel will also detect and detain UDAs. Most pursuits on the range become rescue operations and continue to be a problem for Border Patrol. Carol Heathington stated that with imagery and remote sensing, we could have the capability to correlate what corridors UDAs are using on the range and attention could be targeted to those specific areas.

h. Lisa McCarrick reported that an EA is being prepared for use of sand and gravel for range maintenance. The Corps of Engineers has been contacted regarding the applicability of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

i. Colonel Uken described the proposal being developed for a no-drop target array, sometimes referred to as West TAC. This target would be used for training pilots using night-vision goggles and also for the use of targeting systems for precision-guided munitions, but no weapons would actually be released from the aircraft. Some potential locations are being considered, including along the existing roads in the San Cristobal Valley. Colonel Uken was asked if long-range weapons are being used that would be launched from off the range. He responded that he was not aware of any plans to employ these types of long-range weapons either on or from outside the range.

j. Major Garcia was asked if depleted uranium munitions have been expended in the last 10 years on the range or at Yuma Proving Ground. He responded that depleted uranium was not authorized on the Goldwater Range, and that further information could be obtained from Yuma Proving Grounds for that area. Only A-10s utilize depleted uranium munitions and are used for combat only. A-10s firing 30 mm rounds are limited to target practice rounds.

k. Water Catchments: Air Force staff met recently with AGFD staff to discuss the proposed enhancements at Saucedo Pothole and recommended that work on this catchment be postponed until an overall policy regarding development of wildlife waters on BMGR has been developed and reviewed. The INRMP should include the long-term strategy, measures of success, and potential effects on wildlife and cultural resources.

## 12. MCAS Yuma Project Report, Ron Pearce:

a. The majority of work focused on the INRMP and SEIS for the Yuma Training Range Complex.

b. Flat-tailed horned lizard studies continue along with population trends. Funds are being sought for this project.

c. The AZ DOT has annexed 200 feet of the western side of the range from County 14th Street and Araby Road south to 23 St (9 miles) to complete the area surface highway. The annexed land is outside the lizard management area but inside its habitat area. All necessary environmental actions will be completed prior to starting construction.

## 13. Arizona Game and Fish Department Project Report: Larry Voyles

- a. AGFD projects include ongoing work on bat surveys, population, and species diversity at Cistern Mine.
- b. Vegetation test plots for forage enhancement are being studied.
- c. Pronghorn fawn recruitment is good and going to be healthier than the last few years.
- d. AGFD is monitoring water catchments and will be using cameras to monitor Big Horn Sheep.

14. BLM Project Report/Phoenix Office: Gene Dahlem

- a. The BLM Phoenix Field Office has moved 1 mile east of Deer Valley Road. BLM's new address is 21605 N 7th Ave, Phoenix AZ 86027. BLM's phone number remains the same.
  - b. On 17 Jan 01, President Clinton issued a proclamation for the establishment of the Sonoran Desert National Monument. Mr. Mike Brown was introduced as the manager of the new Sonoran Desert National Monument. The relationship of the monument to Area A was included in the President's Proclamation and military use of air space above Area A and the military training routes will not change. The proclamation continues the requirement for a visitor access permit; changes to that permit process will require concurrence from the Air Force.
  - c. BLM has been busy with congressional tours and Sonoran Desert National Monument community information meetings. The community information meetings are held for providing an open public forum for any interested groups and agencies to discuss issues and concerns regarding the Monument. Community information meetings will be held at 7:00 p.m. on the following dates and locations:
    - 9 May: Town Hall, 644 W. Pima Street, Gila Bend, AZ
    - 15 May: BLM Yuma Field Office, 2555 E. Gila Ridge Road, Yuma, AZ
    - 22 May: Estrella Mountain Community College, S. Conference Room, 3000 N. Dysart Road, Avondale, AZ
    - 23 May: Elks Lodge, 909 E. Florence Boulevard, Casa Grande, AZ
    - 24 May: Best Western Grace Inn, 10831 S. 51st Street, Phoenix, AZ
- (Awatukee area)
- 7 June: El Rio Community Center, 1390 W. Speedway, Tucson, AZ

BLM will be initiating a community based plan later in the year for public interaction. Contact Kathy Pedrick or Chris Horyza at BLM if you would like to be put on BLM's mailing list.

15. BLM Project Report/Yuma Office: Tom Zale

- a. There have been 3,376 permits issued since 1 Jul 00. Permits expire 30 Jun 01.
- b. On 19 Apr 01, BLM worked with Southwest Ego Systems Alliance on the first nature festival in Yuma.
- c. Selection for the Planning Environmental Coordinator has been approved.
- d. Rangers continue to support the Border Patrol staff.
- e. BLM is actively working with the flat-tail lizard site group.

16. Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge Project Report: Vergial Harp

- a. Curt McCusland was introduced at the Partners Meeting. He is working on the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and various alternatives are being worked. Completion of the CCP draft is anticipated in the fall.
- b. Law enforcement issues are a big concern due to the impact of

UDAs, most in the history of the refuge.

c. Sonoran pronghorn habitat protection is ongoing.

d. The Sonoran Shindig held in Feb 01 was highly successful. There were 1500-2000 visitors. The festival was the first of three upcoming festivals to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Refuge Systems.

e. Don Tiller will be retiring after 34 years and more information concerning his farewell will be given out as it becomes available.

f. Big Horn Sheep studies will be part of the CCP.

17. Border Patrol Projects Report: Maurice Moore

a. Acquisition of two surveillance cameras looks positive for people surveillance on the range.

b. The Ajo Border Patrol Station is looking at the issue to reduce the number of UDAs on Highway 85. The area UDAs use the most is the east side of Highway 85 north of El Camino del Diablo. Sensors cannot be used in wilderness areas.

18. The meeting adjourned at 1500. The next Partners meeting will be held on 13 Sep 01 at 1000 and be hosted by BLM in Yuma.

//signed//

Col. James Uken, USAF  
Chairman